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Rainless February may mean return of drought

BY RYAN SABALOW AND DALE KASLER
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Weather experts spent much of this winter cautiously optimistic. There were still weeks to go in the wet season and the reservoirs were full, thanks to last winter's near record-breaking rain and snow.

Now, even the professionals are getting more than a little nervous. There have been weeks of hardly any rain. The Sierra Nevada has received record-low amounts of snow. Meanwhile, the calendar is flipping ever closer to California's blast furnace dry season.

"The outlook isn't good," said David Rizzardo, chief of snow surveys with the Department of Water Resources.

California's Sierra snowpack is a measly 22 percent of average. That's worse than it was even at this point in 2015, when California ended winter with the thinnest snowpack in recorded history, just 5 percent of average.

It's only slightly better in the Sacramento Valley.

Sacramento has seen 7.8 inches of rainfall – 50 percent of average. No rain has fallen in the city since Jan 25. The National Weather Service forecasts scattered rain and snow Sunday through Tuesday, but the precipitation amounts are expected to be miniscule.

Gov. Jerry Brown declared an end to the five-year drought last April, but most climatologists and forecasters say drought-like conditions have returned. The U.S. Drought Monitor, which is compiled by multiple federal agencies, says an estimated 45 percent of the state is in moderate to severe drought,

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Ex-student arrested as 17 slain at school



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Jorge Zapata, 16, hugs his mother, Lavinia Zapata, after a shooting at a high school Wednesday in Parkland, Fla., that killed at least 17.

Expelled teen captured in Florida with semi-automatic, ammo clips

BY CHARLES RABIN, CARLI TEPROFF, KYRA GURNEY AND DAVID SMILEY
Miami Herald

PARKLAND, FLA. An American nightmare unfolded Wednesday afternoon at a south Florida high school after police say an expelled

teenager returned to campus and opened fire with an assault rifle, killing 17 and wounding 15 more in the nation's deadliest school shooting since a gunman attacked an elementary school in Newtown, Conn.

Just before dismissal at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, thousands of students puzzled at the sound

of a fire alarm were launched into a panic when gunfire punctuated the din. As teachers and students fled through hallways and hid under desks, a gunman opened fire, leaving a trail of bodies and stunned confusion in his wake.

The Broward Sheriff's Office says Nikolas Cruz, 19, walked the halls of the high school wielding an AR-15 and equipped with multiple magazines. U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson of Florida told reporters that Cruz pulled a fire alarm and then, wearing a gas

mask, began tossing smoke bombs and shooting people as they ran through the haze.

Police say Cruz gunned down a dozen people inside buildings on the school's sprawling campus, two more on the grounds, and one more on the corner of Pine Island Road as he fled. Two more died at the hospital. Many underwent surgery at Broward Health hospitals.

The Broward Sheriff's Office says the school, home to about

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SPORTS

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Kings rookie will join teammates Buddy Hield and Bogdan Bogdanovic for All-Star weekend in Los Angeles. 1C

Hackles rise against proposal to ban youths' tackle football

INSIGHT

BY TARYN LUNA
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Hours after two California legislators unveiled a plan to outlaw tackle football until high school, angry coaches, parents and former players began mobilizing to protect America's favorite sport from a notoriously "nanny" state government.

They created a Twitter account, SaveCaliforniaFootball, and a matching hashtag. One coach set up a meeting with a

Sacramento lobbyist to learn how to engage lawmakers on bills. An online petition opposing the bill collected more than 30,000 signatures in a little over three days.

"At what point do we just bubble wrap our kids?" said Jason Ingman of Natomas, a parent and youth coach who launched the petition. "It's not a perfect world. We're never going to take injury out of sports. We can't just abandon it because we can't be 100 percent safe."

Mike Wagner, a Pop Warner official in Los Angeles and an organizer of the growing opposition campaign, described the legislation another way: "It's completely un-American."

Sacramento Assemblyman Kevin McCarty hasn't even formally introduced the bill yet. "I knew we would strike a nerve," McCarty said. "I knew it was a tough conversation."

McCarty and Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez Fletcher, both Democrats, announced their intent last week to craft

legislation to establish a minimum age to play contact football, comparing their proposed government intervention in the sport to previous public health measures that mandated car seats and vaccines for children.

To McCarty, the science is clear: "Football in general has its risks and it's especially dangerous to younger kids."

McCarty cited a Boston University School of Medicine study released in September that found players who participated in tackle football before age 12 experienced more behavior and cognitive problems in life than players who started playing later.

The study showed those who participated before age 12 were twice as likely to have "prob-

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